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Rural & Remote Medicine
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JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

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Codeine changes start today

Changes to the availability of codeine containing medicines come into effect today (1 February 2018).

President of the Rural Doctors Association Australia (RDAA), Dr Adam Coltzau, said that while the up-scheduling of codeine has been well publicised, some patients will remain surprised when they can no longer buy their preferred pain medication over the counter.

"I have no doubt that starting today there will be disgruntled people who were either unaware of the coming change or who did not make plans to change their medication," Dr Coltzau said.

"Everyone should be aware that they may consult with their pharmacist where available or where there is no pharmacist their health clinic team regarding alternative over-the-counter medications. It is imperative that consumers who have previously used over-the-counter codeine to manage pain see their health care provider regarding alternative medications or therapies that are available to them.

"And of course for those patients whose doctor or nurse practitioner recommends codeine-based products these remain available to them by prescription.

"The up-scheduling of codeine has provided a positive opportunity for both patients and prescribing practitioners to increase their knowledge of the safer and more effective pain relief medications and treatments, review their condition and re-assess their approach to management of these conditions," Dr Coltzau said.

President of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), Associate Professor Ruth Stewart, said that patients should start a conversation with their GP about their pain problems to find a treatment that works for them.

"There's no clinical evidence to suggest that over-the-counter codeine products are more effective analgesics than similar medicines without codeine," A/Prof Stewart said.

"Talking to your GP about your pain is the best way to address it, as they're equipped to suggest a pain management strategy based on your symptoms.

"Medication alone is often not the most effective way of treating many conditions, and a multidisciplinary pain management plan will help get the best results.



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“In rural and remote areas, where people may have to travel to access their health care provider to review the management of their condition, it is important for consumers to schedule a visit with their GP or other health care provider. Where pharmaceutical services are available, consumers can take advantage of the Government’s new Pain MedCheck program that will be rolled out across community pharmacies for a one-on-one consultation with your pharmacist.

“Online resources such as www.realrelief.org.au can provide consumers with the facts and information on the proven alternative pain medications that are available and there may also be specialist and allied health services available via telehealth for people living in rural and remote communities,” A/Prof Stewart said.

RDAA is working with ACRRM, CRANAplus and the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) to ensure that all rural doctors, rural and remote nurses and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers can access relevant training and information so they can advise and/or prescribe the best and most appropriate form of treatment available to consumers following the change.

Visit www.rdaa.com.au for more information.

A high resolution photo of Dr Adam Coltzau [is available by clicking here.](#)

Available for interview:

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ACRRM President, Dr Ruth Stewart
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